



Election Modernization Committee

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Conducted by Remote Participation

Minutes

Attendance: Greg Dennis, Juli Brazile, Maxwell Palmer, Juhan Sonin, Paul Parravano, Jennifer Susse, Walter Horn, Adam Badik, Patricia Muldoon, Len Diggins, Rebecca Gruber, Jagat Adhiya

1. Executive Order on Remote Participation

Greg reviewed the Governor's order.

2. Draft Minutes for Review, Edits, and Approval - Dec 7, 2021

Minutes approved with one correction.

3. Status of Home Rule Petitions

Town Meeting legislation was reported out of the Election Laws Committee. Juli reported that a question was raised at the third reading. Town Counsel sent a detailed reply. No other news on the Ranked Choice Voting.

Paul asked about cumulative voting (Lani Guinier's proposal). Greg said she liked many versions of proportional and ranked choice voting methods. She objected to quotas and the need for majority minority districts when better voting methods could accomplish the same goals.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wll-5_FskcEU-CEcPVSioxAE-hK7ERzU/view

4. Polling Location Recommendations

The sub-committee meeting started with 2 options from Juli and 1 from Jennifer. They each have pros and cons. Key comments from the lengthy discussion are summarized here.

Walter: link to the map in the presentation.

Greg: report should reference the lack of Chestnut Manor.

Jennifer: we could propose a drop box at Chestnut Manor.

Greg: favors making the fewest changes possible in this round, so he'd keep 1 3 5 at Thompson. Jennifer suggested P3 at Hardy because gym is larger and many families in P3 attend the Hardy.

Adam: is AHS an option? Interim plan?

Juli: will talk to Dr. Homan.

Greg: why remove Bishop as a location? Report should explain the small space and provide reasons for closing.

Option 3 is popular with many - it moves P17 out of Peirce

Greg: we need recommendation to address the obvious contingency of AHS not being an option.

How much space at Gibbs? Could P9 also vote there?

First attempt to summarize - to minimize changes results in 9 locations. Does not address small space at Bishop or the travel issues for P9 to Bishop. It does reduce a precinct at Peirce and provide a more convenient option for P17.

Same

1-5 Thompson/Hardy

6, 7 Gibbs

17 Town Hall

8, 10 Town Hall

9, 11 Bishop

12, 14 Brackett

13, 15 Stratton

16, 18, 20 Dallin

19, 21 Peirce

Issues to address:

- Can we close Bishop? P9 could vote at Town Hall or AHS. Can Stratton take P11? Juli concerned about the space, but will investigate. P11 should not vote at AHS - too far.

- Is AHS viable this year - parking during construction? Is it viable before completion of the project - could there be a year when the gym isn't available?.
- Are more drop boxes an option? Value to better serving Chestnut Manor and Drake Village. Juli considers Drake Village as a possible location for the 3rd drop box.
- Additional drop boxes create a strain - they have to be checked daily. And there are security issues - we need cameras and to consider the town's surveillance policy.
- Develop a parking solution for Sept for all school locations. April and Nov are not school days.
- Is the first day of school an election day? If so, probably fewer options to disrupt parking or class schedules.

Patti: prefer not using AHS this year.

Walter: beautiful bldg to show off.

Jennifer: Red Gym is UGLY which re-enforces the new bldg.

Some ideas for general improvement to voting in Arlington were proposed during the discussion.

Greg: Somerville election staff take abs ballots to the VA Housing. Can we do something similar in senior housing?

Adam: In general, we should address parking at all polling places and create plans that maximize convenience for voters. It should consider reserving parking for voters, waive parking and meters.

Second version. If AHS can be used and Stratton can handle 3 precincts, close Bishop. To use AHS, we need a parking plan for September. This plan also involves 9 locations.

1-5 Thompson/Hardy

6, 7 Gibbs

8, 10 Town Hall

9, 17 AHS

12, 14 Brackett

11, 13, 15 Stratton

16, 18, 20 Dallin

19, 21 Peirce

Vote: the sub-committee is authorized to revise the report and present the 2nd option to the Select Board, substantially as discussed.

5. Early Voting Warrant Language

ARTICLE: HOME RULE LEGISLATION/EARLY VOTING FOR TOWN ELECTIONS

To see if the Town will vote to authorize and request the Select Board to file Home Rule Legislation to permit early voting options for Town elections, or take any action related thereto.

Walter: how early? We haven't developed the language yet.

Adam: make it vaguer? We added the word "options" to what Greg drafted.

Juli: what is the goal of the article? Submit ballots early (drop off mailed ballot at the counter or a drop box or come in person to vote early and leave a sealed ballot.

Greg: Unlikely to be approved by the legislature, so details not overly critical. Doug has looked at the language.

Vote: that Greg submit this language to the Select Board from the Committee.

6. Public Comment and/or Questions

Jagat: what is the status of vote by mail? Less stress on precincts if we can get it passed. Juli reports there is no word on this yet from the legislature. Greg notes passage of the Votes Act is desired by many advocacy groups, so it's not a dead issue.

Juhan: re: RCV language that says the Clerk "may make any changes to the tabulation voting process." Did we mean to give that much power to the Clerk? Juli notes the options the Clerk chooses will be transparent in the report. Greg notes some of the flexibility is about the need to add some constraints to make the ballot work.

Greg: Lesley will get us sample legislation to give us a starting place on our early voting article.

7. New Business

No new business.

8. Adjournment

Next Meeting is February 15th at 7:30

Meeting was adjourned at 9:14